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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 000650

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SCUL](#) [VE](#)
SUBJECT: EDUCATION MINISTER CHAVEZ REPLACED BY NAVARRO

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Classified By: A/POLCOUNS DANIEL LAWTON, REASON 1.4 (D)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: President Chavez replaced his brother Adan Chavez with Hector Navarro as Minister of Education on April ¶30. Adan's next mission will be to take charge of the United Socialist Party of Venezuela's (PSUV) reelection campaign in the Chavez family's home state of Barinas. Adan's removal may be a concession to opponents of the government's efforts to institute "Bolivarian" reforms into the education system. Adan strongly supported this process and may have been out in front of the rest of the government. His dismissal may also indicate President Chavez's desire to shore up PSUV's election prospects in a state long considered solidly pro-government, but recently rocked by corruption scandals.
END SUMMARY.

Exit Adan Chavez

¶2. (C) President Chavez announced April 30 that he replaced his brother Adan Chavez with then Minister of Science and Technology Hector Navarro. Upon assuming his new role as Education Minister, Navarro stated his willingness and desire to discuss with the opposition elements of the education reform mandated by President Chavez. For his part, President Chavez himself admitted that there had been errors in the past in the manner in which the BRV pursued education reform. He stated the need to acknowledge and correct these errors. The BRV's ideologically-laden education reform generated considerable public opposition and forced President Chavez to announce the postponement of consideration of the issue until ¶2009. President Chavez may also have been reacting to media reports that the Education Ministry continued to hold teacher training workshops at public schools, despite the Venezuelan President's order to put the new curriculum on hold.

Problems in Barinas

¶3. (C) President Chavez may have had additional motives for Adan's dismissal as Education Minister. During his thank you and farewell speech to his brother, President Chavez announced that Adan would be sent, "to the plains, with your hat and your horse, to the PSUV." Barinas, a plains state where Chavez' father is a second-term governor but cannot run again due to term limits, has recently suffered corruption scandals linked closely to the Chavez family.

¶4. (C) Two of President Chavez's other brothers, Argenis, the Barinas Secretary of State, and Narciso, also active in

Barinas state politics, were accused by Barinas National Assembly member and then-Chavez supporter Wilmer Azuaje of corruption. At the time, Azuaje was a pre-candidate for Governor of Barinas. Azuaje accused the family of using public funds to acquire vast land holdings in the state and was subsequently expelled from the PSUV. In addition to the two accused brothers, there are two other Chavez brothers actively involved in the politics of the state. Anibal is a town mayor, and Adelis works for a bank which provides services to the government.

Enter Navarro

15. (C) Hector Navarro, a former Central University of Venezuela professor and electrical engineer by training, has long standing ties to President Chavez and the Bolivarian Republic. He served as Education Minister from 1999-2001, then Minister of Higher Education from 2002-2004, where he had a hand in creating experimental and Bolivarian universities. Most recently, he was Minister of Science and Technology.

16. (C) A senior Education Ministry civil servant told Poloff May 8 that Navarro is as ideologically driven as his predecessor. She opined that Adan Chavez' efforts to implement the new K-12 Bolivarian curriculum had to be postponed because Chavez did not allow the Education Ministry to incorporate administrators, teachers, and parents in the process of reforming the curriculum. She noted that the BRV continues to discreetly conduct teacher training workshops in the new curriculum in "safe" areas where no opposition is anticipated. The senior civil servant also noted that Chavez succeeded in retiring a large percentage of experienced

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administrators and teachers to make way for pro-government replacements recruited through a non-competitive, politicized selection process.
DUDDY